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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAMAKO 000776

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [ML](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND GENERAL WARD MEET WITH MALIAN  
PRESIDENT AMADOU TOUMANI TOURE

REF: A. A. BAMAKO 754

[1](#)B. B. 2008 BAMAKO 217

Classified By: Ambassador Gillian Milovanovic, Embassy Bamako, for reasons 1.4 (b) (d).

#### SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (S) On November 27 the Ambassador and Commander of the U.S. Africa Command, General William E. ("Kip") Ward, met with Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure (ATT) to discuss security in Northern Mali. ATT reiterated his commitment to take action against Al Q'Aida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb, now possibly in January. General Ward encouraged the President to follow through with convening the Bamako Summit. ATT indicated he plans to travel to Algiers to meet with Algerian President Bouteflika to set the date, demonstrate his commitment and gain his support. ATT and General Ward agreed that, with or without regional cooperation, Mali has no choice but to move forward in confronting terrorist and criminal elements in the North.

THANKS FOR SUPPORT WITH HARD LANDING

[1](#)2. (S) On November 27 the Ambassador and U.S. Africa Command General William E. ("Kip") Ward met with Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure (ATT). The Ambassador and General Ward were accompanied by Foreign Policy Advisor Dr. Raymond L. Brown and AFRICOM Public Affairs Director Colonel Frank Childress. ATT was accompanied by Minister of Defense Natie Pleah, Secretary General to the Presidency Diango Cissoko, and Chief of Defense Poudiougou. General Ward thanked the President for Mali's support in the recent hard landing of a plane carrying U.S. military personnel approximately 65 miles outside of Bamako. ATT reiterated ref A comments that it was only natural Mali should help, since after all he knew the United States was coming to help Mali.

#### PROGRESS AND CONCERNS IN NORTHERN MALI

[1](#)3. (S) ATT said that since General Ward's last visit (ref B) the Tuareg rebellion had been brought to an end. Even the head of the most recent rebellion has sent a message of peace, and ten or so of the former rebels, "since they like to fight so much" are being sent off to support the African Union Mission in Somalia (see IIR 6 958 0021 10). ATT said he had concerns about the Salafists, another term for Al Q'Aida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). While the Salafists have had difficulty getting their message across to a generally reluctant population, they have had some success in enlisting disaffected youth to their ranks. He said the Malian Army is at a turning point, with the older generation

in the military giving way to a younger, less experienced one. In this regard, he thanked General Ward for the training the United States is providing to the recently created Echelons Tactiques Inter-Arme (ETIAs).

#### NEED FOR MORE REGIONAL COOPERATION

¶4. (S) ATT lamented that regional cooperation appears to be stalled. Mauritanian President Aziz is a soldier who understands the situation. He has put the recent political troubles behind him and is working well with Mali. Niger has always been a good partner. Although the country has its own Tuareg rebellion problem and is focused on a domestic political crisis, Niger continues to work well together with Mali. Military cooperation with Algeria is the problem. ATT said the Algerians think we do not do anything, and they are not totally wrong, but we need Algeria's help in terms of air support. It is not just a matter of destroying a couple of AQIM bases, we have to be able to hold the territory. The longer the situation drags on, the stronger the Salafists will get.

¶5. (S) ATT directly linked revenues from drug trafficking to terrorism. He said the Boeing 727 which had been set fire near Tarkint, in Northern Mali after it got stuck in the sand on or about October 30 may have been carrying drugs. Mali is cooperating with friendly countries to try to gain information about the nature of the flight and has lodged complaints about the violation of its air space with Interpol and with the UN Office of Drugs and Crime. ATT said security will be easier to achieve with three or four countries

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working together rather than alone. If the other countries cannot agree, then of course we have to do it ourselves, he said.

#### UNITED STATES COMMITTED TO HELP

¶6. (S) General Ward thanked the President for catching him up on the situation. He said he is happy to hear of the President's continued commitment to fighting terrorism. If the government of Mali is unable to gain better control over under-governed territory, it will continue to give free reign to arms and drug traffickers and terrorists, frustrating legitimate development efforts. General Ward said that, with Ambassador Milovanovic, we are paying close attention to how we can increase the capacity of the Malian Army to eliminate the threat posed. The United States is looking to ensure a continuum of training and maintenance capacity building. Keeping trained units together and using the equipment provided in a sustainable manner will help Mali achieve its goals.

¶7. (S) General Ward said he shares ATT's analysis that the bad guys do not respect borders and that Mali needs regional cooperation. Having just come from Algeria, General Ward said he had made the same point to Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, as well as to the Algerian Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense, and to the Chief of Defense: all agreed to the need for regional cooperation. General Ward said he would be looking for signs of increased cooperation on the ground.

¶8. (S) The USG supports the implementation and follow-on to the meeting of Chiefs of Defense in Tamanrasset, Algeria as well as the heads of state meeting in Bamako. General Ward said he hopes the joint operations center discussed in Tamanrasset will become a reality soon, and will be able to support operations in the North of Mali. Once the operations center becomes a reality, the USG stands ready to assist with training and equipment if asked, as well as providing transparent updates on U.S. security engagement with regional partners. General Ward said he was very impressed by ATT's statement that, whether or not the neighbors get involved in a constructive manner, he would be taking responsibility for

security in the North. "When that step is taken, no one will be able to say you have not done anything."

#### MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

¶9. (S) The President said he shares General Ward's views. He noted the frank and excellent working relationship he has with Ambassador Milovanovic, noting wryly that he is sometimes embarrassed by, but always appreciates, her directness. Returning to security questions, he described his childhood memory of "the dance of death" from the village in which he grew up: If you dance too far ahead, you die; if you dance too far behind, you die; if you do not dance at all, you die. That is the way it is in the fight against the Salafists, he said. We have no choice but to move ahead together.

¶10. (S) Chief of Defense General Gabriel Poudiougou mentioned that the Algerian Special Forces Commander had just left Bamako November 26 after a two day visit in which he worked with his Malian counterparts to establish a transmission network and a better cooperative working arrangement on the ground. Colonel Amadou Gueye, in charge of military cooperation at the MOD, said that a mixed committee for joint military cooperation has been set up, and the fourth meeting is scheduled for December 15 in Tessalit, Mali. It is to be attended by an Algerian General. ATT said he is planning a trip to Algiers to ask Bouteflika for air support, shortly after the Tessalit meeting.

#### ATT THOUGHTS ON ALGERIA

¶11. (S) ATT then asked the Ambassador and General Ward if he could speak to them privately. In that meeting, he mentioned that he had gone to see Libyan leader Muammar al-Qadhafi and, contrary to the view of some, he is the most interested of all in a head of state summit in Bamako. ATT said that, after Tabaski (November 28), he will be going to see President Bouteflika and sending Malian Foreign Minister

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Moctar Ouane to the other countries to find a date for the summit.

¶12. (S) ATT said he believes Bouteflika and the Algerian leadership genuinely want to cooperate, although they have real doubts about Mali's resolve. His visit is intended inter alia to dispel these doubts. ATT said he thinks Algeria's intelligence services and army are holding up cooperation, and believes the Algerian army is infiltrated with Salafists. He is nevertheless pleased with the improved cooperation with Algeria, and said a lot is riding on concrete outcomes of the December 15 meeting in Tessalit. He wants the heads of state summit to take place first, and then to be prepared to start operations within a week or so. This implies that the cooperation already has to be working, in advance of the summit.

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¶15. (S) General Ward said the United States will continue to support Mali's efforts with training and equipment. He pledged to follow up with the Algerians, telling them how important the next delegation meeting is, and conveying ATT's commitment.

¶16. (U) General Ward cleared this message.

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